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ADDRESS BY HAROLD CARDINAL, PRESIDENT, INDIAN  
ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA, DURING PRESENTATION BY  
THE INDIAN CHIEFS OF ALBERTA TO THE PRIME  
MINISTER AND THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA, JUNE 4 1970

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Mr. Prime Minister:

It is evident, from what you have just heard, that we have reached a critical point in relations between Indians and the Federal Government. In many important, fundamental issues our views seem to be diametrically opposed.

It is disheartening at this stage in our history, to have made so little apparent progress towards reaching an understanding of each other's point of view. We take encouragement, however, from the fact that this meeting is being held here today and we interpret it as an indication, on the part of the Government to open, finally, avenues to meaningful discussion. Our presence here means that we, likewise, are prepared to do our part. We have come, not simply to reject the Government's White Paper on Indian policy, but, on behalf of the Indian Chiefs of Alberta, to present our alternatives, which may be the basis for a new and more positive relationship between ourselves and the Canadian Government. *theme*

We have reiterated, time and time again, that we cannot accept the contents of the Government White Paper. Although we have made this position abundantly clear, we find that the Government is already taking steps toward the implementation of these policy proposals. Before any meaningful discussion can begin, we must insist that the implementation of these unacceptable proposals must cease immediately.

If that assurance is given, we would like to present our alternatives and to explore what avenues are open for a dialogue that will be productive and significant for the Indian.

Before anything else can be achieved, however, the Canadian Government must recognize its historical, legal, moral and constitutional responsibilities in relation to aboriginal rights and treaty obligations. We are aware that the Federal Government position of these rights and obligations is opposite to our own beliefs.

We are also mindful of the fact that an Indian Claims Commissioner has been appointed without our endorsement or consultation. In our view, he was appointed by the Government simply to strengthen and support the Government's opposition to our concept of aboriginal and treaty rights. At the same time, as you are aware, the Indian people of Canada have created a committee to research these matters from the Indian point of view. In effect, we have reached a stalemate on this crucial issue.

You, as our Prime Minister and our leader -- and your Government, through its White Paper -- have clearly indicated that you do not accept the concept of aboriginal rights. Your various statements indicate to us that your position on this fundamental issue is not flexible. For our

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part, we can scarcely be expected to be flexible in these matters, which are basic to our relationship with the Crown, with your Government, and with the larger Canadian society.

If our understanding of your position is correct, then we have reached an impasse. As civilized people, there are two alternatives available to us.

1. We can refuse to talk to each other and divert our energies into increasing polarization which will lead only to mutual destructiveness ....or....
2. We can sit down and seriously begin to assess the options we have and -- if we find that our philosophies cannot be reconciled -- then, the rational process would be to create, by mutual agreement, an arbitration body whose judgement will be binding on both sides.

In our Red Paper we have proposed four alternatives:

- (a) The Government could appoint a Committee of the House of Commons and the Senate to deal with registered Indians and their affairs.
- (b) The Treaties and all supporting evidence could be referred to the Supreme Court of Canada.
- (c) Interpretation of the treaties might be referred to an impartial body such as the International Court of Justice.

The fourth option, and perhaps the one to be preferred, would be

- (d) A truly impartial Claims Commission, appointed after consultation with the Indians, with broad terms, wide powers, and whose judgements would be binding on both parties. This, in fact, is the kind of solution proposed by the Liberal Party during the election campaign of 1963.

The Indians of Alberta would like to emphasize, however, that these are not necessarily the only alternatives. We see a process of discussion and consultation, through the medium of our National Indian Brotherhood, leading to the creation of a mutually acceptable arbitration body.

Once these fundamental questions were resolved, we feel that we could begin to build a new pattern of relationships between the Government and the Indian people that would be creative and positive.

These matters concern the conceptual and legal framework within which we could work towards long-term solutions. We would like to deal briefly now with some of the administrative alternatives proposed in the Red Paper.

first, we can scarcely be expected to be flexible in these matters, which are basic to our relationship with the Crown, with your Government, and with the larger Canadian society.

If our understanding of your position is correct, then we have reached an impasse. As civilized people, there are two alternatives available to us.

1. We can refuse to budge in our stance and insist that our position be maintained. In this case, we would have to insist that our position be maintained.

2. We can sit down and seriously begin to discuss the options we have and — if we find that our proposals cannot be reconciled — then the national Government would be obliged to consider, by mutual agreement, an alternative proposal which will be binding on both sides.

In our last letter we have proposed four alternatives:

- (a) The Government could appoint a Commission of the Peace to investigate the situation in the Northwest Territories.
- (b) The Government could appoint a Commission of the Peace to investigate the situation in the Northwest Territories.
- (c) The Government could appoint a Commission of the Peace to investigate the situation in the Northwest Territories.

The second option, and perhaps the one to be preferred, would be

- (d) A jointly Imperial-Canadian Commission, appointed after consultation with the Indians, with broad powers, wide mandate, and wide jurisdiction, would be placed in both territories. This, in fact, is the kind of solution proposed by the Liberal Party during the election campaign of 1967.

The Indians of Alberta would like to emphasize, however, that there are certain essential conditions for any solution. As has been pointed out in our letter, through the action of an Imperial-Canadian Commission, leading to the creation of a mutually acceptable negotiating body.

That these four essential conditions were received, we feel that we would begin to build a new pattern of relationship between the Government and the Indian people that would be creative and positive.

These matters concern the present and local concerns of this nation. We could wish to see long-term solutions. We would like to see a new pattern of relationship between the Government and the Indian people that would be creative and positive.



1. We have proposed a review of the Indian Act -- not its abolition.
2. We have proposed a new kind of federal agency, different in scope and intention from the present Department of Indian Affairs. This agency would be related to the legal and moral responsibilities of the federal government to the Indian people and would be more attuned and responsive to our needs and aspirations.
3. We have proposed a re-examination of the options open to Indian people for control of their land -- without accepting your concepts of property rights.
4. We have also asked for our own Minister of Indian Affairs -- a Minister whose sole responsibility would be Indians.

In all of these matters -- as in the matter of aboriginal and treaty rights -- we see a process involving discussion and negotiation between your Government and our people. He must be prepared to accept the idea that the process of isolating and resolving our fundamental differences will be long and time-consuming. It will require patience, political courage, a willingness to experiment, and a good deal of understanding on both sides.

At the same time, however, we must realize that the alleviation of Indian poverty, infant mortality, the astronomical school drop-out rate, and many other urgent problems, cannot be delayed until negotiation of our rights has been completed. We must begin to deal with these problems immediately and our basic approach in all of these areas is that resources must be transferred to the Indians to permit them to find their own solutions. To some degree, these social problems are shared by all of the people of Canada and the Government has not been notably successful in dealing with them. It is just possible that, with access to resources, the Indians might produce answers that would benefit us all.

Specifically, in the area of education, we are proposing that the available resources for this purpose be conveyed to the Indians, and not to some other Government structure. With the necessary resources, Indians have demonstrated that they are capable of directing and developing educational programs that fill the special needs of their children. In Alberta, we have proposed the creation of an Alberta Education Centre, conceived as a vehicle for developing Indian leadership and management skills which would prepare Indians to administer their own local governments and to benefit from the economic development of their communities.

The Centre would also conduct research in Indian education and the development of Indian curricula that would offer an alternative to the provincial educational program and help to reduce the present 94 percent drop-out at the Grade 12 level.

It would also train teachers and develop techniques that would enable our elders to participate in the formal education of our young people by





conveying our traditions and culture and making it possible for them to participate fully and proudly in both societies.

Related to educational achievement is the need for economic development of our communities. Without economic opportunity, our newly-learned skills would be meaningless. We are proposing for Alberta the creation of a community development corporation representing a partnership among both levels of government, private enterprise and -- most important of all -- the local people themselves. This corporation would channel all outside aid to these communities, making sure that economic growth and development is consistent with the total social fabric of the community. Again we wish to emphasize that a fundamental principle involved in all Indian programs must be the transfer of resources and responsibility to the Indian people and their leaders for it is they, in the final analysis, who will determine success or failure. This is the significant difference between your paper and ours -- the difference between doing things for Indians, and giving Indians the resources and responsibility to do things for themselves.

Throughout our paper, and throughout all of our proposals, there is the underlying requirement for consultation. We are firmly convinced, however, that the Department of Indian Affairs, with its archaic structure and misguided philosophy, is incapable of participating in a sincere and intelligent process of consultation. We feel it is imperative that your Government create a new structure with which we, through the National Indian Brotherhood, can negotiate.

We therefore recommend two immediate steps:

1. Dissolve the present negotiation and consultation group within the Department of Indian Affairs, and instruct them to cease immediately the process which is underway of implementing the White Paper Proposals.
2. That the Prime Minister and his Cabinet enter into negotiations with the National Indian Brotherhood for the purpose of creating a new consultative body, mutually acceptable to both the Government and the Indians, which would have the power to begin planning the re-allocation of resources into Indian hands and the creation of a framework within which differences about treaties, aboriginal rights and land tenure can be resolved.







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